

**Managing Tech Environment Case Study:
A Look at a Southern California Elementary Public School**

Joseph B. Bustillos

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Jack McManus, Ph.D

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Rien ne réussit comme le succès
"Nothing Succeeds like success"
Dumas

The most important resource of an educational institution is neither its physical structure, nor its curriculum. In an elementary school this resource comes in small packages and large packages. If great care is not maintained even the most successful schools can take on the worse aspects of a bureaucratic institution occupied by disgruntled under-appreciated employees. In such a case the resource becomes the institution's downfall.

Such has not seemed to be the case at "Horacio Hornblower" Elementary. This K-5 public school has had a continuing habit of excellence and success. Over the past two years, however, the school has had to face two very difficult challenges. Last year, in spite of ever improving test scores and receiving back-to-back awards of excellence the staff was required to move from its previous reading and language arts programs to the district and state mandated "Open Court" program. This required a complete realignment of every aspect of every grade levels' teaching day.

The second challenge came at the beginning of this year when a new principal was assigned to the school. The new principal had come from a similarly successful school in the district. But for the faculty, it was still a case of not knowing what really to expect after having become used to the relationship they had with the former principal. Would the school's staff be able to adjust to all these changes and continue the practices that contributed to its success over the years?

Data: Setting

“Horacio Hornblower” Elementary sits in a suburban track of North Long Beach that calls itself Lakewood Village. A couple blocks north of Long Beach City College, the campus has a park and middle school as one neighbor with churches and comfortable single-family homes as the others. Green lawns and plenty of shady trees surround the campus itself.

In 2001 the school was in the midst of competing for its second prestigious award. “Horacio Hornblower” Elementary ended up receiving recognition as a 2002 California Distinguished School, having received recognition as a U.S. Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 1999 (Long Beach Unified School District, 2004).



Data: Personnel

Out of a teaching staff of 43, one-fourth or 13 have been teaching less than 15-years. That is also about the same ratio of teachers who have been teaching at the school for less than five-years: one-fourth or 12 teachers. For six of the 43 teachers teaching is a second career. Out of an office/custodial/part-time staff of 16 all but two have been working at the school for five years or more. The one new office staff person this year is the principal.

Grade levels tend to work together as CoPs (for the purposes of this analysis I've grouped the Special Day Classes as one “grade level” and Special Services such as RSP, computer lab & speech as another “grade level”). The ratio of “veteran” staff members to “newcomers” is 5-to-2 or better in six of the eight grade levels. Over the past four years there has tended to be a natural pairing of “newcomer” with “veteran” in most grade levels with little or no apparent orchestration by the administration. The consistency and success of this support has depended

largely on the leadership within the grade level, with some influence by the proximity of the classes of the same grade level with one another and the sense of access of those classes towards fellow grade level members (see Appendix A).

Data: Physical Infrastructure

“Horacio Hornblower” Elementary is a split campus with a busy street running right down the middle. A concrete footbridge, needed to manage the heavy daily traffic from one side to the other side of the campus, joins the two parts of the campus over the street. Some teachers have commented that it is more like two campuses.

The west side of the campus houses grades K through second, the library, RSP, Speech, cafeteria, auditorium and front office. The east side of the campus houses grades three through

five and the computer lab. Two lower grade Special Day classes are on the west side and two upper grade Special Day classes are on the east side. One four/five literacy class is on the east side. After school recreation is housed on the playground for all grade level on the east side.

The majority of the classrooms on the west side are part of the U-shaped two wings of the original school buildings



designed in a “mission style” (buildings A & B). There are 20 classrooms on this side of the campus, of which four are portables set out behind the cafeteria near the west side playground. This year four of the six second grade classrooms occupy the portables.

On the east side there are also two buildings in an L-shape (buildings C & D). Of the 20 classrooms on this side of the campus seven are housed in portables. Three of the four fifth grade classes, three of the four fourth grade classes and one third grade classroom occupy the east side portables.

Administrator Profile and Management Style: “Dave Davies”

“Dave Davies” knew that he had a good staff already when he first came to “Horacio Hornblower” Elementary eight years ago. He had come to the school following a number of years as a classroom teacher, most recently teaching math and computers at one the school district’s middle schools. “Horacio Hornblower” had a strong sense of community within the grade levels and tremendous parental support and participation and Davies saw it as his job to foster continued growth in these areas.

Davies worked directly with the teaching staff, which was organized by grade level. He also depended a great deal on the office manager (formerly known as the school secretary). She was the pivotal person who made all of the numbers work (budgetary and student enrollment). Besides other resource people (RSP, Speech, Library, Music and Computer Lab) Davies was also able to off-load most of the student discipline matters (preventative and ongoing) and state testing management processes to the school’s fulltime counselor.

Davies had each grade level assign one person as their representative and the majority of the time Davies would funnel information and ideas to and from these representatives. This

method enabled him to get things done without having endless meetings with 40-plus people and allowed the teachers to meet with one another when it best suited them (often during lunch or right after school). For the most part Davies used the leadership reps to decide budgetary matters.

Alas, one of the ironies of being a successful school in a comfortable middle-class neighborhood was that there was very little discretionary funds to work with. After personnel, textbooks was the next largest budget item. Davies said that the money they did get usually had to be spent on certain items or in a certain way. With the textbook money, however, he allowed the grade levels to decide what sets of consumables to purchase and which to ignore. Also, each teacher had a small amount of “lottery money” to spend and often grade levels or a couple teachers in the grade level would put their moneys together to buy more substantial items like a TV/VCR/DVD unit. Davies didn’t regulate this money.

Sometimes Davies used the district’s size and their mandate to comply with state/federal regulations to push the budget. He said, “Pretty much there were set budgets... but that really wasn’t even our budget, it was just suggested money because you just turned it in centrally and they did all the purchasing. And if you went over, they didn’t really care... whatever the budget said didn’t matter because we had to have certain texts for certain years in order to comply and so it didn’t have to do with how much I spent, it depended on how much we needed.” Thus, Davies’ style tended to be one where he chose to not sweat the small stuff but to focus on the larger requirements.

Davies felt that a great deal of his job was to work the district end of things so that the classroom teachers wouldn’t have to be bothered by endless meetings and paperwork. He depended on the grade level structure and leadership to manage a lot of the curriculum oversight (making sure everyone was relatively on the same page, in compliance and supported when in

need). He had key people in place to manage the office, the physical plant and student services. Davies felt that the greatest challenge of his job was “Juggling all the balls.” He said that, “there are so many things to do and you have to do them all well, or things start falling apart. So you gotta keep juggling constantly.”

After having worked as a classroom teacher working directly with kids, Davies said that working directly with adults is much more difficult. He said, “The adults did more knucklehead things than the kids did. You have to look at some of them [the adults] and wonder, ‘How old are you?’ [laughs] ‘Where did you miss out in the maturity line?’ Besides winning the lottery, Davies said that one thing that would make him quit being a principal is if the district was to undermine his authority to manage the school site. He said that in some districts, because of contract agreements, principals are not allowed to walk through the classrooms unannounced or without prior warning. Some districts also do not allow their principals to reassign teachers to different grade levels without the teacher’s full consent he continued. “If I’m going to take all the flack for everything that happens in a place I have to have access,” Davies said, “You know if they took that away... if they gutted our authority, yet still expected results and still expected us to still carry all the responsibility well then, that would make me want to quit.”

At the end of the day, after a successful seven-year run at “Horacio Hornblower,” after receiving “blue ribbon” and “distinguished school” recognition, and continuing to maintain improving test scores year after year the one thing that made it all worth it, according to Davies, was the kids. “When you go out on the playground the kids come up and give you hugs [laughs]. That helps make the day better.”

Administrator Profile and Management Style: Staff Reflections – “Kathy Welch”

“Kathy Welch” taught on the upper grade/East side of the campus. She was grade level rep for her grade six of the seven years Davies was principal at “Horacio Hornblower.” She felt

like managing things through the grade level reps worked. “I think that there were some things that fall by the wayside with any principal that the whole site doesn’t decide on. I think sometimes as grade level reps we made the decision right then and there, and he just went with it... But I think taking it back to the grade level reps and then giving us time to talk it over as a grade level is a good way to do it. I think it worked really well.”

Whether he dropped in on their grade level planning meeting or received a memo of their plans from the rep to put in his folder, Davies was kept informed of the teachers’ plans and progress. Using the grade level structure was his preferred method of working with the teachers, according to Welch. Because he was so well informed, Welch said, “He pretty much left us alone. He let us make decisions. He knew what we were doing in the classroom so he wasn’t overly pushy or anything like that.”

Where the structure might not have worked so well was in the positive feedback department. According to Welch, “he wasn’t always the best at saying, ‘You’re doing a great job in the classroom,’ or ‘Thanks for working so hard...’ He wasn’t the best at that... I don’t think it was because he wasn’t impressed, I think he just... that was just his way.” Welch also believed that Davies was so easy going and had such a strong desire to make everybody happy that “[to] a lot of teachers Davies was kind of a ‘push-over.’ The [X] grade teachers had him wrapped around their little fingers.”

Another area where Davies may have been off his game was in encouraging and/or providing for staff development. At the end of the previous year, when it looked like Davies might be reassigned he told Welch that he hoped they’d bring in an administrator who was strong in professional development. Fortunately for Welch and the other staff members when a new administrator was brought in this past year the new principal was very strong in encouraging and

supporting professional development. One thing that the new administrator did was to get buy-back days for staff members participating in professional development, basically finding a way for them to get paid for time spent in staff development. But beyond the effort to get compensation for the teachers, Welch noted that it was the words or notes of praise that made the most difference to her. "She knows who is taking professional development. I took some computer classes and she let me know that she knew that I was doing that kind of stuff ... that's kind of nice. But she's paying attention to that kind of stuff, whereas Davies probably did too, he just didn't let us know that... He didn't come up to you and say, "Oh wow, you're taking some computer classes, that's great." That's one of the difference[s] between the two of them." So, for Welch where Davies tended to fall short was in providing adequate positive feedback.

Interestingly when asked what would make her quit teaching she mentioned if a principal told her that she was going to have to teach kindergarten the next day. She said, "I don't know for sure if I would say, 'I quit,' but it would make me really have to think about it because I don't feel like my strength is in that area." And as diametrically opposed as these two attitudes might seem, it's the same sense of rejecting an arbitrary decision that might get in the way of getting these kids the best education, the best teacher and the best experience that they could have. In this both Welch and Davies are in complete agreement.

Administrator Profile and Management Style: Staff Reflections – "Angela Goodmum"

"Angela Goodmum" taught on the lower grade/West side of the campus. She came to "Horacio Hornblower" the same year that Davies took over as principal, eight years ago. She agreed with Welch that, "there was a lot of things that we did not have to do because he [Davies] kind of filtered through the things from the district. And he knew that we were doing our job."

But she also felt like a lot of things that were done during the staff meetings that could have just as easily been given to her in a memo. Equally annoying to her was the feeling that so much that was proposed to be done by the district was rarely followed up on. "A lot of it never came to be. They threw out stuff and said, 'Yeah, we're going to do this, this, and this.' And no one came to see if you were doing it, not that we weren't doing it, but there some things that you just kind'a let go because you knew we were doing fine and we were doing what we needed to do and no one said on paper that 'You have to do this.'"

Goodmum felt that Davies' part in this was that he was very quick to jump on the latest fad. During his last year, when the staff was adapting to Open Court, Davies also pushed to have them use two additional curriculums, Mountain Math and Mountain Language. Thus, a year later, the district mandated Open Court continues to be used but for Goodmum and many others, she says, Mountain Math and Mountain Language for the past year has remained stuffed away in some box somewhere.

Goodmum's experience in decision-making also seems to differ a bit from Welch's. She only remembers deciding on how to spend her individual allotment (combining it with another teacher's in order to buy something bigger), but she has no memory of ever taking part in deciding how site improvement funds/site level funds would be used.

Goodmum also experienced Davies tendency to be lenient a bit differently than Welch. Whereas Welch felt he was a bit lacking in positive feedback and sometimes let grade levels do their own thing, Goodmum felt he needed to step in more when there were difficulties between staff members. Both Welch and Goodmum felt Davies tended to avoid conflict. Goodmum experienced it a but more personally when, according to her, he failed to intervene when a grade level team member was being consistently disruptive to the group. As she saw it, he hoped the problem would just go away.

When it came to discussing what would make her quit she was in agreement with both Welch and Davies that the continued influence of what looks like arbitrary decision-making that would prevent them from doing their job would cause her to leave. Her passion was strongly shared against one-size-fits-all curriculum and invasive testing which does nothing to help children learn.

Conclusion

All three educators agree that their “clients” are their students. Working with the kids, seeing the light go on in their eyes, being on the receiving end of an innocent unabashed hug is what it’s all about for them. They also agree that two of the most important parts of an administrator’s job are to maximize the amount of time and energy a teacher spends teaching and minimize the other (often district mandated) functions that do not contribute to time spent teaching.

What is less clearly expressed is that education is about all of the people, not just the little ones in the smaller seats. In fact the greatest resource of any educational institution are those highly educated, often childish professionals we call “teachers.” While Davies acknowledged that his teachers sometimes lack the social common sense of children, Welch and Goodmum might add that at such times the helping hand of a strong administrator might be a very good thing.

Because education is about people, all it takes to poison something very good is for these professionals to feel powerless or a growing sense of powerlessness to do their jobs. All it takes is for them to feel slightly less than appreciated for the job that they do. All it takes is the person in charge to quietly ignore a need of one of their “subordinates.” As we know with children holds

true with adult, one size does not fit all and to be “in charge” is to be at the service of those “under” you.

“A business enterprise (or any other institution) has only one true resource: people. It succeeds by making human resources productive.” (Drucker, 2001, p. 15)

Appendix A

Twain Classroom teachers listed by grade level

Grade	Age			Gender		Years Teaching		Years at Twain	
	30s	40s	50s	F	M	>15	< 15	>5	<5
5 th	0	3	1	3	1	2	2	2	2
4 th	1	2	1	4	0	2	2	3	1
3 rd	2	4	1	7	0	5	2	5	2
2 nd	0	7	0	7	0	7	0	5	2
1 st	0	5	2	7	0	6	1	5	2
K	1	5	0	6	0	5	1	5	1
SDC	2	2	0	4	0	1	3	4	0
Spec. Serv.	0	4	0	3	1	2	2	2	2
Totals	6	32	5	41	2	30	13	31	12

Appendix B

Interview transcript with "Dave Davies",
Former "Horacio Hornblower" Elementary Principal

1. How is this division (group) organized?

A. What group?

How are your areas of responsibilities organized (given all the groups you have to work with on a school site)? How do you interact with the various groups?

A. Hmmm [pause] oh wow...

Okay, back in the [T] days we had 40-some staff members and then there were the front office people you had to deal with....

A. Okay, they were organized... the beginning breakdown there was the certificated group and then the classified group. And then under the certificated group the teachers could be broken down to classroom teachers, and they could be broken down to regular ed teachers and special ed teachers, and then you had "specialists."

In your week to week management stuff did you find yourself working mostly with leadership representatives or...

A. Not in elementary school, no, you pretty much just work with the folks you supervise. Under the certificated section there was no leadership. In the office [E] was the office manager. I worked with her and she represented me to the other office people.

Did she seem to do a lot in terms of working with the custodial group?

A. Yeah, she didn't have any authority over [D], he is the plant manager so he had his own thing. So he was another one I worked with in a leadership capacity. The plant manager, whatever had to do with the grounds, the place, then I went to him. With [E] it was more like running with the inner workings, working with the personnel. She's a confidential employee so we could actually talk about personnel.

2. What are your governance constraints? - whom do you report to? etc. Is there a board, an individual?

A. Well, ultimately we all report to the board, but my immediate supervisor was an individual.

3. How do you conduct your strategic planning? (maybe you should ask if the person does strategic planning first.)

A. We looked at current data and then made decisions about what to do in the future

4. Who is involved in the planning and budgeting process? Did you try to assess things in a very small group, then present it to a leadership group and then let them throw their parts in or was it more collaborative or how did you feel in terms of how the process worked?

A. Usually we started with the leadership team at school, then the grade level representatives from the different grade levels and we would look at data and I'd present data. And then we'd make decisions on the direction of things. From there they would take it out to their folks and talk about it. Sometimes we worked on it in a whole staff meeting based on an initial look at

things in the small group, and sometimes I'd just bring it to the whole group, depending on what it was.

You had mentioned before that one of the previous administrators was more, their style going back then was more they made all the decisions and then...

A. Two administrators before me, she made every decision [laughs]. She had "shared decision making." She shared all of her decisions with the staff. [laughs].

5. How are budgeting and planning linked? Who gets involved in that?

A. Well, it depends on which budget. The leadership team got involved in the special Federal monies and State monies. And then the regular, what they call the "01" general account monies, I pretty much made the decisions about that because it can only be used in certain ways. And basically buy your supplies with it. Of course, we let everyone let us know what supplies they needed. But as much as how much to spend, no, I didn't share that with anyone.

When it came to general usage funds, did you base it on usage from the year before?

A. Yeah, We based it on trends from past years. [E] had all of that knowledge.

I'm curious because I tried to do that with the consumables and from year to year, it was radically... one year things would disappear by October, the next year I'd have stuff sitting around in February...

A. Yeah, well, I mean, there's no perfect way to do it, because you can't stand in there and make sure everyone uses just a certain piece of paper every day. I've always been a little bit loose with purchasing supplies, because it's just impossible to regulate it.

6. How are resources allocated to a task? But it seems like we just had a normal operating budget...

A. At [T] there wasn't a whole lot of money. Pretty much there were set budgets like, [D] had his set budget [for custodial needs], we had the general budget, we had a textbook budget, but that really wasn't even our budget, it was just suggested money because you just turned it in centrally and they did all the purchasing. And if you went over, they didn't really care because you had to have certain... whatever the budget said didn't matter because we had to have certain texts from certain years in order to comply and so it didn't have to do with how much I spent it depended on how much we needed. You know, that budget and then... there were a zillion budgets and the line items... there thirty didn't little budget categories at least. And they're all restricted in one way or another. You just kind'a make the most of each one.

Was the biggest non-personnel item related to textbooks then?

A. Yeah. Textbook purchases ran, depending on the textbook, generally ran about \$40,000 to \$60,000 a year. And that would depend on the adoption that year. With language arts it was more like a 100 [thousand].

Then they change it [the adoption] what like every three years?

A. Seven. But every year you're purchasing something, even if it's just music.

8. How do program and personnel evaluation take place?

A. They're on a schedule. They're on a set schedule and timelines based on union contracts. And it's every other year for certificated permanent employees, every year until they're permanent. And then with classified it was every year.

When I was with ABC Unified once you were a full-time teacher, I think it was three-years and then they had a little tenure ceremony. Long Beach doesn't do that...

A. There's no ceremony [laughs], you just rollover, you just sign the new contract. Basically that's what it is.

9. Whom do you perceive to be your clients?

A. The kids and their families.

So it's the community then?

A. Yeah.

10. For the most part how do you communicate with your clients?

A. Through the teachers, and then through newsletters, and public meetings, like PTA and leadership team.

11. How do you deal with conflict? How does it get resolved, say on a staff level?

A. Between staff members? Generally it's done privately with me. It depends on what it is and if it needs to get to me or not. For instances, on the playground, if it was small time stuff Rosie [playground supervisor] would take care of it on her own with her people. But if it was bigger than that she would come to me and say that I need you to sit in on this. It's the same with Evvie [office manager] and the people she supervised.

So each level kind of take care of their own...

A. Yeah, but when it came to teaching staff it's pretty much me.

12. What is the most challenging thing that you do in a day?

A. Juggling all the balls.

You feel like you have to keep everyone [happy], everything moving?

A. Well, there are so many things to do and you have to do them all well, or things start falling apart. So you gotta keep juggling constantly.

13. What is the most fun part of this job?

A. The fun part is just seeing... getting recognized by the kids, I guess. When you go out on the playground the kids come up and give you hugs [laughs]. That helps make the day better.

I'm one of the few like you were every kid knew me, so it was the same sort of thing where you'd walk through Especially on the primary side because I didn't get over there that much

Now most of these questions we've geared more toward your job with the staff. But there's a whole huge part of your job having to do with the people you report to. How often did you have to report to... how much of that part of your job takes up your time...

A. Reporting to Karen Defies? You mean that? A couple hours a month.

I know that I felt like part of the job I saw you doing was Every district has tons of paperwork that needs to get done.. and for the most part the staff didn't see as much of that as I've seen other staffs see. Because it seems like you took care of an awful lot of that for them.

A. Yeah, I tried to keep [it] as much out of the classroom as I could.

Because I know, you have some staffs or school sites you are not quite as successful [as [T]] and they just get buried in paper...

A. Yeah, like that's going to help [laughs]. Yeah, I would do the opposite. Lighten up on the paperwork and maybe they can teach 'em.

14. What one thing, if it were to happen, would make you quit your job today?

A. [pause] If I won the lottery [laughs]. I think I had no say in the direction of the school. In other words, let's say... and it's like this in many ways in LA, they've agreed to so many contract changes as to what the principals can do for instance you cannot move anyone to another grade level unless you ask their permission. You can't do walk-throughs in some districts where can't just walk through to see what's going on [in the classrooms]. Principal can't do that. You know, there's a lot of dumb things... things that seem dumb to me, I mean, if I'm going to take all the flack for everything that happens in a place I have to have access.

You know if they took that away... if they gutted our authority, yet still expected results and still expected us to still carry all the responsibility well then, that would make me want to quit.

You came out of a teaching position into an assistant principal job. What was the biggest change for you from one job to the next, for you, kind of an eye-opener for you?

A. I went from working directly with kids to working more directly with adults, and I found out that kids are easier [laughs]. They're much easier than adults. The adults did more knucklehead things than the kids do. You have to look at some of them and wonder, "How old are you?" [laughs] "Where did you miss out in the maturity line?"

Appendix C
Interview transcript with “Kathy Welch”,
“Horacio Hornblower” Teacher

3. How do you conduct your strategic planning? (maybe you should ask if the person does strategic planning first.) I’m going to skip ahead to things that apply more to you than to your supervisor, like the school planning, how the school does it’s strategic planning, whether or not, who is involved?

A. You mean by grade level?

That’s just it, the principal has got to deal with it in terms of the whole site and you as a staff member you’re dealing with your own part, it think what I’m interested in finding out is how it works for you and your perception of the job that the head person does.

A. Okay, because when we plan as a grade level we meet after school or on our planning days to plan whatever it is, whether it’s the computer lab or if it’s some kind of big unit that we’re going to teach to the kids, or if we’re going to team together [to share] what everybody’s going to teach. So we meet together to talk about it all, so that’s what we use Thursday, you know, after school to plan those kinds of things. And we always gave the administrator notes, “this is what we planned, and this is what we talked about,” so that he knew what [our] grade was doing. And he always kept those in a file folder so he always knew what was going on in [our] grade. So meeting together as a group really helps us because then we can plan our units together and therefore pretty much everyone in [our] grade is doing similar things. You know it’s all kind of the same thing, just maybe taught a little differently. Planning was basically done that way, meeting as a grade level. And then sometimes [the administrator] would come to... I remember he even came to our planning days sometimes or he’d come to our room after school and he would talk with us. So he was up on, you know, that the standards were being taught and the units that we said we’d do were being taught. And [he’d] give us pointers from there.

As an observer or participant, how did you feel things were done as far as site level planning?

A. Like, how did we do that?

Right, because you were part of the grade level leadership, weren’t you?

A. Right, I was grade level rep. In fact when [administrator A] was there I was grade level rep for six of the seven years he was there. I think one year he told me I had to find somebody else to do the job [laughs]. For site planning it was done two ways. At [whole] staff meeting he might bring something up that the whole staff needed to vote on then and there or needed to discuss. Or a lot times what he would do was in our grade level rep meeting he would always have a board and he would have just different items that needed to be talked about. And then what we were supposed to do is we would talk about it as grade level reps and we gave our input and then we had to take that information back, usually that same day, a lot of this stuff kind of had to be turned in, meet with our grade levels, talk it over, make the decisions whether it was like, how do we want the money spent, do we want it for the computer lab or do we want it ... you know, how do we want to spend it and then in the grade level we made a decision and then we turned that information in to [the administrator] and then he took all the grade levels and then from there, that’s how a lot of the decisions were made. But a lot of times he would do it in the staff meeting

too, where he would bring it up in staff meeting and vote on it then and there. But he likes to do a lot of grade level rep stuff. [Administrator B] is the same way. She likes to give it to the rep and have the rep take it back and then as a grade level make the decision and then get her the information back and then I think what she probably does [which is] the same with [Administrator A], they probably took the information and made a decision based on the majority.

Did you feel like with [Administrator A] that it worked, that it was an efficient style?

A. I think so. I think that there were some things that fall by the wayside with any principal that the whole site doesn't decide on. I think sometimes as grade level reps we made the decision right then and there, and he just went with it. But that's not really site-based. But I think taking it back to the grade level reps and then giving us time to talk it over as a grade level is a good way to do it. I think it worked really well.

4. To what extent did you feel like you guys were involved in planning in regards to budgets?

A. Any time there was lottery money, or extra money, he always gave us the decision, there was always... "Do you want to use it on computers, do you want to use it"... Gosh, I don't remember some of it. But most of the time it was pretty good. He let us decide on the lottery money, on the site-based money. I think those are the main things we decided and then there was always things like staff meetings, do we want them in the morning or do we want them in the afternoon. You know, like little piddly things. Things like that were always brought up for us to vote on. But the money, the funds that we could spend a certain way, he was pretty good about letting us decide that on our own. For a while there, each classroom or each grade level got so much money and that could be spent grade level wise or divided up and each teacher got a part and we could buy supplies for your room.

When I mentioned budgets and stuff like that one of his comments was "well at [School A] there really wasn't any money." [laughs] Besides personnel the biggest chunk of money went straight into textbooks. And whatever was left after that was what was fiddled with.

A. Right. And for textbooks and stuff he was always good about letting us decide if we wanted some of those consumables because some of the consumables we don't use, so why spend the money on them if we're not going to use them. So he was pretty good about letting us decide as a grade level.

8. How do you feel program and personnel evaluations were handled?

A. You mean like evaluating him?

In terms of how he worked with us...

A. How do I feel how he worked with us? I actually liked him. He pretty much left us alone. He let us make decisions. He knew what we were doing in the classroom so he wasn't overly pushy or anything like that. I think sometimes he might have had trouble communicating... he wasn't always the best at saying, "You're doing a great job in the classroom," or "Thanks for working so hard." You know what I mean? He wasn't the best at that. But I think that's just a difference between a woman and a man. Because [Administrator B] has been very positive with that. And

she'll let you know straight out, "You did a great job," "I like that," whereas he didn't do so much of that. But I don't think it was because he wasn't impressed, I think he just... that was just his way. His social skills maybe weren't always right there. I know sometimes at staff meetings he kind of let people talk and he wasn't so firm with that kind of stuff.

So it was one of these sorts of things where it might be perceived that [Administrator B] was a little bit more strict but she was also a little bit more forthcoming with praise.

A. Right. I think [Administrator B] doesn't put up with a lot of stuff, but she's really good at giving that praise that you want to hear. I mean, all teachers need to know that they're doing well. Or that they like something about your classroom, and she's very good about put down little notes that you're doing a good job. Whereas [Administrator A], he'd pass on good notes, but ... you didn't always know, you didn't always feel whether you were doing a fabulous job because you didn't feel like you were getting that from him. And he was a little more lenient. He also let us just do what we're supposed to do and not.. whereas she's kind of changing things, he kind of knew that we knew what we were doing. He kept a lot of stuff away from us that was nonsense stuff that we didn't need to do because he knew that we were doing an okay job. Whereas [Administrator B] tried to change a little bit of that. She knows that we're doing a good job, but she's also going to make us accountable some more than maybe [Administrator A] did. And I think [to] a lot of teachers [Administrator A] was kind of a "push-over." The [X] grade teachers had him wrapped [around their little fingers]. That just a personality thing between a man and a woman and how they ... you know [Administrator A] was just kind of easy going whereas [Administrator B] is more in control. She's just more "This is the way it's going to be done, I'm changing this, and it's too bad if you don't like it." Where he wanted to make everybody happy. And I think both of them were really good. I like [Administrator B] too. There's just... the change is hard, in certain areas.

It almost feels like because there was some changes coming down the pipe that there was some kind of design in changing the administrator at the same time that these other changes were going to happen.

A. Right. Well, [Administrator B] is more into finding professional development, where as [Administrator A] admitted that... I remember when I talked to him at the end of the year, the last year he was there, he said if he was to leave he hoped that someone would come in who was really strong in professional development because he felt that his weakness was in professional development, getting professional development for us. And she is pretty strong in that because she is the one who got us those buy-back days, she's the one that told us that there was Open Court staff development available this summer that we really should go to. So she is good in that area. Some of it may be a little too much, because, for instances, the summer ones you don't get paid for it so why would you go? Why would you go to Open Court for five days? You know what I mean? But she kind of makes you feel like you really should. She keeps an eye on ... she knows who is taking professional development. I took some computer classes and she let me know that she knew that I was doing that kind of stuff and that I was ... that's kind of nice. But she's paying attention to that kind of stuff whereas [Administrator A] probably did too, he just didn't let us know that. Because I'm sure he saw that stuff cross his desk too. But he didn't come up to you and say, "Oh wow, you're taking some computer classes, that's great." That's one of the difference[s] between the two of them. I really liked him, I mean I miss him.

9. Whom do you perceive to be your clients?

A. You mean like types of parents, kids...?

Who do we work for?

A. We work for the kids. That's what we focus on, we're here to teach the kids and to help them improve and to learn and to have a good environment for them. Parents are a part of it because it all comes in a package. You know, some times it's good and sometimes it's not. But, I think, basically teachers go in and they're there for the kids. That's part of teaching, they love kids, they want to help them. So, basically that's who I'm concerned about when I got to my job everyday. Is if I'm doing what I'm supposed to for my kids, and am I making a difference in their lives?

Do you feel like [Administrator A] had the same focus?

A. I think so. I think he really enjoys the kids and he would have them come in and read to him. Yeah, he wanted the best for the kids and that's why he was making sure that content standards were being taught and that we were doing what we were supposed to do, and that scores were going up. His main focus was kids too, I think.

12. What is the most challenging thing that you do in a day?

A. There is kind of a variety. I mean, depending on your class, if you have a class that has special needs, you have a lot of kids that are "504s" your challenges are... For instance, my class last year I had a couple "504s" two or three who were on AD/HD medicine, I some kids that needed to be on AD/HD medicine but couldn't focus. And each one of them had their own set of guidelines and just special needs.. They needed their math test cut up or they needed bigger font. And so the challenges are that you want to meet each of those kids. You don't want to leave anybody out. And so to be able to do that and meet [the needs] of each of those kids as well as [pause] teach, plan your lessons, paperwork, not only what comes from kids but what comes from the district because they always have something that they want filled out, they want something inputted. So I just think that it's all the paper work, the busy work, those... I mean, teaching kids is easy. That's what we're trained to do, but then when the district is saying that you have to this and you have to do that, here's more paperwork... And the parents can be a real challenge.

What's a "504"?

A. A "504" is a document that is written up for students who need extra help like [S] had a 504 because he needed extra time on his math tests, he needed his benchmarks read to him. So a 504 is written up if a student needs some extra time, whether they're on AD/HD medicine, for instance we wrote one up for [E] in my class because she knew her multiplication facts but she needed her paper cut up and she needed more time. And so he just documented in the 504 that the teacher has to follow through with that. It's not like an IEP [Individual Education Plan], because 504s, you can cancel those at any time, they don't go with you for the rest of your life. You know, if you need one forever. It's written in there for testing, they can have more time, they can have it in a different environment, just depending on what the child needs.

13. So, what is the most fun part of this job then?

A. Just teaching kids and seeing the excitement on their faces when they learn something new, just to be excited to be at school and come every day and then to see the difference that you make.

14. What one thing, if it were to happen, would make you quit your job today?

A. [pause] I don't know if any one thing would make me quit. But I know I would not be happy if a principal came in and said, "You're going to teach kindergarten tomorrow." I think that would probably ... I don't know for sure if I would say, "I quit," but it would make me really have to think about it because I don't feel like my strength is in that area. And I'm not sure if I like it when a principal coming in and saying, "You have to put the content standards and your lesson plans on the door for every assignment. Those are the kinds of things that would really make me think, is it worth it? Am I here for the kids and now I'm doing this extra busy work. Is it worth spending that extra time when I could be spending it doing stuff for the kids. That would take me so much more time where I could have that time to plan something fun for the kids. Those are the sorts of things that would make me think about it. I'm not so sure I would quit, it would probably depend on the situation but would definitely not be happy.

Some people say, "Well, if I won the lottery." [laughs]

A. But you know, if I won the lottery... 'cause this is the funny part. [Husband] got a raise awhile back, and eventually, he's working his way up the ladder, and I probably wouldn't have to work. We'd probably be fine, but I always think, well, look at my salary right now, we could have [Husband's] plus mine and put it all in a retirement fund so that down the road we're fine. So I think of it that way. So if I won the lottery, I probably would still work. Maybe not full time, maybe part time. But I've always been one, even in the summer I used to work every summer just because, you get bored after a while. [M] believes there no way you can get bored and [R] does too, but I'm sure [R] does school stuff everyday. I just get to the point where it's really nice to have a break. And tutoring two days a week is perfect because I'm working, I'm making money but yet I do have some time to garden and do a few things that I want to do. It's good to have that down time away from the busy hectic school schedule. But if I had that every day, I mean, after a while what more can you do? Everybody's working, [husband] is working. I'd get bored [laughs].

The other thing is, when you're working you're talking to adults, your friends are around. But when you're at home you're by yourself. Your friends are working, or your friends are teachers and they're off doing whatever anyway. I never really get together with most of the teachers when summer is here. And so you lose that. You're not a part of... You don't talk to adults every single day and you miss out on things that are happening. I think everybody needs that. So I do miss that. That's another reason why I couldn't stay home every day [laughs].

Appendix D
Interview transcript with “Angela Goodmum”,
“Horacio Hornblower” Teacher

1. How is this (group) organized? You guys would meet together as a grade level either after school on Thursdays or on planning days.

A. Right.

For the most part when you met as a whole group [6 to 7 teacher] it was on planning days.

A. Right.

What would you change to make it more efficient?

A. I think we made it efficient because we needed to get stuff done and we knew that we weren't going to be getting these days. There weren't that many days so when we did, we got stuff done pretty efficiently because the team leader would delegate. And then more people pulled more weight than others to make it work.

Now, in terms of site level when things needed to get done, what was your observation as to how [Administrator A] got that job done? What methods would he use and that sort of thing.

A. From what I understand there was a lot of things that we did not have to do because he kind of filtered through the things from the district. And he knew that we were doing our job, so... He kind of jumped on band wagons sometimes. I like [Administrator A], he's a great guy but he would, like with the Mountain Math and Mountain Language, like he bought that whole program but a lot of people were like, “Yeah [Administrator A], whatever.” Like it's sitting in a box in the room because we had to do the Open Court that year as well. So we started Open Court and Mountain Math and Mountain Language at the same time.

So do you feel like some people were using it and he decided that everyone needed to use it?

A. Yeah. [K] was using it and introduced it to everybody. And then a lot of people still do it, but I don't really feel like there is enough time if you're doing everything else as well.

3. Now in terms of the planning stuff, what was your observation as far as the stuff that seem to come through the grade level leadership and how much stuff came through like whole, you know, when we'd all sit in the staff meeting?

A. A lot of the stuff that came through at staff meetings I could have read. And it didn't hold that much weight because a lot of the things they ended up talking about never really came to fruition, it was like “whatever.” It was something else for people to get annoy by really. That's what it seemed like.

A lot of it never came to be. They threw out stuff and said, “Yeah, we're going to do this, this, and this.” And no one came to see if you were doing it, not that we weren't doing it, But there some things that you just kind'a let go because you knew we were doing fine and we were doing what we needed to do and no one said on paper that “You have to do this.” So people would get a little aggravated, especially the veteran people were saying, “Whatever, here's another thing.” Kind of get into that [attitude].

Now compared to the rest of the staff of people that you worked with, would you consider yourself more in the veteran group or do you consider yourself in the middle?

A. I consider myself a smidge in the middle because I haven't seen all of the trends come and go. Like [E], or even like [A] or [M], they've been at the school almost twice as long as I've been there. I've been teaching as long as they have and longer than some but as far as the district goes I'm kind'a like in the middle. This will be my 8th year. But there's just a lot of stuff about this district, the people, I mean I can pass them on the street and wouldn't even know who they are. Whereas at [N] or [L], where I taught before they knew you.

4. Now in terms of stuff related to budget, did you guys get a grade level budget or did you get ... how was that stuff managed?

A. As far as spending the money that we got for lottery money?

Yeah, either lottery money or if there was ... did you guys feel like you participated in deciding how the money was spent?

A. No. Not really. We would get out lottery money and we could spend that on what we needed. And [D] and I would put our money together and bought a TV/VCR/DVD player. We would put our money together and buy something more tangible and something we could use all the time. But as far as what we did last year, as far as voted on all that stuff [site improvement moneys], we never did any of that. That was new to me.

8. In terms of program curriculum decisions and personnel evaluations... I know at [A] school district whenever a new textbook series was up we would have the three different vendors come and we would get a chance to decide ...

A. ... As a school which one you would do...

Right. Have you been through that process?

A. I've been through that process at my old school...

Buy never at [T] though?

A. No. and I think that's part of the whole... you know, this is a massive district. And they're having trouble in certain spots, so they're trying to... their rationale is that everybody, if someone were to leave [T] and go to [M] or go to some other school that they're doing the same unit that everybody else is doing, so they can jump right in and get busy. Which to me is "whatever." That's not a reason to make everybody do something because you need to put a Band-Aid on a problem.

So you feel like the curriculum decision as far as we're going with is kind'a based on the needs of particular parts of the district and doesn't take into account the population that you're actually working with?

A. That's what I believe. Right. Exactly. And the fact that our test scores were fine without having to do Open Court, we were able to do unit planning and make things more thematic and still hit all their standards. But do it in a way that the kids remembered and "Remember when we read this," and not another Open Court with ten questions and five bubble-in answers. 'Cause those kids, I was feeling so bad because I was going in the office and I would see the [X] grade

teachers running off the same thing and I'm like, "Oh my gosh, these poor kids. I'm in [G] grade and they're going to have to do this for [X] more years?!" That many more years of reading and bubbling? How sad.

And no writing.

A. Yeah.

Now in terms of personal evaluations do you feel like the process was efficient in the way you were treated, or a sense of fairness or that it was relevant?

A. Yeah, I did. I think that it would be nice if they put in some way to show if you exceeded expectations and if you're putting in the extra time. That type of thing really isn't reflected in the evaluation. And I think it should. Because there are just some people who come in, walk in, do their thing and scoot-out. And they got a very plain little classroom going and they're meeting the standards but they're not going above and beyond making it fun for the kids and doing extra projects. It doesn't reflect that one exceeds or whatever. And I'm sure that that could be because that could be subjective and they can't document that.

9. Who do you think the real clients of a school are? Who are we working for?

A. The kids.

Do you feel that the administration functions with that in mind or do you think that their mind is somewhere else?

A. I hope they do. I think so. I think at our school they do. I think that sometimes the kids turn into numbers and it's like API and all that stuff. It can get a little bit distorted. With all the pressure put on administrators to meet their scores and everything and that the kids become a part of that number system. And when we look at how our kids did, "Ooh ours are in the 90s in Math and 80s in.." you know. It can get a little crazy.

10. What kind of job do we do communicating to our clients? Not just the students, but the community and parents.

A. I think that we have pretty active parents, but I think the ones that fall through the cracks are the ones that are working parents that can't be there to pick them up after school. But I think that we do a fair job on that. We got back half of a take-home survey, so I don't know if that means that they were all content or just didn't bother.

Do you feel like when [Administrator A] what there to you feel like we did the same level job more or less communicating with the parents or a better job? It's not an evaluation of [Administrator B] but just in terms of the differences.

A. But since [Administrator B] was only here for one year I don't know that it's a fair thing to say. I think that [Administrator B] is going to be ... I think that [Administrator A] would kind of waiver and would avoid issues. I like [Administrator A] though, but I think that he was non-confrontational, whereas [Administrator B] is going to be "Nope, that's it." She took the keys and we all turned in our keys. People weren't happy with it, but they did it.

11. So your assessment would basically be that [Administrator A] avoided conflict.

A. He avoided conflict. Absolutely.

Now, when you couldn't avoid conflict...

A. And between colleagues too. Where I actually had a thing with . . . where [Administrator B] was right on it, "Okay, go do this," she gave me exactly what she wanted me to do about it. So I was like, "Oh, Okay."

So you didn't feel like you had that kind of support or involvement by [Administrator A].

A. No, I felt like [Administrator A] would rather it just go away. He'd rather not deal with it. He'd rather you try to fix it yourself when there were clearly times when he needed to step in and say "Knock that crap off." A lot of it was with [A], she caused so much havoc on our team. It wasn't even funny. And he did nothing.

12. What is the most challenging thing that you feel like you have to face every day?

A. Trying to meet the individual needs of all the kids when they're at such different levels, as far as their academic needs and all the little social things going on and all the baggage they bring in. [laughs] You can get kids that are reading two years above grade level and have kids reading two years below. To try to work the classroom, to get everybody to move forward it's kind of a challenge but I do my best.

13. What is the most fun part of this job?

A. Is getting to know these little... my "clients." [laughs] You know, just trying to make it fun for them and something that they'll grow and become better little people and be educated at the same time, kind of the whole ball of wax. I think it's fun to have that kind of positive influence on kids and show them how much power they actually have to do good in the world.

[It's] as simple as walking in the grocery store... I've told them you walk into a grocery store and your mom's right there and there's an old lady walking by you can say, "Hi." You might be the only person that she has says "Hi" to her all day. They're like, "Wow." I'm like, "Yeah." "Well my mom says not to talk to strangers." I said, "Yeah, but you're mom's right there so you can say 'Hi.'" And what this old lady going to do to you anyway?" That kind of thing, just to have the power to make people feel happy.

14. What one thing, if it were to happen, would make you quit your job today?

A. [long pause] If I won the lottery... No, I'm just kidding. I think if they just continue to implement these programs in places where they don't need to be implemented then people are going to leave. Because it takes away our ability to address all the kids needs when we all have to read the same story in class. It's boring for eight of them. It's about right for six of them and the other six more are going, "I don't know what you're talking about." You know, so when they do that they're really... I think in the long run it's actually going to hurt us. Hurt the kid, and hurt the scores, and whatever. So if they continue to put out these blanket, "You will do this," I think that people will leave and go to some other smaller place where they're letting people do what they know how to do.

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